

Ellie Jensen

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Professor Limbu

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Choosing Psychology As Your Major

Introduction

When I was younger I constantly bombarded anyone with ‘why’ questions, curious about all the unseen functions working out of plain sight. Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions (McLeod 2011). There is a certain natural wonderment to human behavior. To why our bodily needs are just as dire as our social ones as well. That is truly the fascination with this major, to discover all the rudimentary importance of being able to shape a human from a citizen to a psychopath. It also explains why it is currently the second most popular major students go into. We will go through the fields that are inclusive to this major and what each one entails. From there we will discover the options Michigan State provides for psychology students. What are the highest credentials you can gain with a major such as this. Then look at the options for after graduation an undergraduate degree can obtain and what graduate courses can be crucial for other occupation opportunities. Also why this major is so vital and can become an impacting carrier for both yourself and your clients and where can you locate psychologists and the psychology building on Michigan State’s campus. After all the academics are achieved what future prospects does any form of psychology degree give you? Finally how the need for writing has its place in this major. But first lets address my personal interest in the topic.

Background Information

Psychology firstly became considered my college major when I took an advanced course in high school. One of the subunits was behavior including insanity or psychopaths, it is here when we looked closely to serial killers. To sit in class trying to comprehend the logic, in lamens terms, of why someone is compelled with need to do such horrendous acts, is both challenging and intriguing. Kathryn Bigart earned a major in psychology from Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio. She chose psychology because, “I knew I wanted to be in the health field and the majority of occupations can benefit from having a basic understanding of the human psyche.” What initially inspired her was, “the really well designed tests and what we’ve learned from their results like Pavlov’s dog to Harlow’s monkeys and its fascinating that the more you come to know in reality the more you realize you don’t know.” However there are difficulties in psychology such as, in her personal experience, “since psychology deals with the disorders of the brain it’s difficult to physically measure treatments and give a definitive diagnosis.” Despite the difficulties that vary in this field Mrs. Bigart states, “psychology in its basic essence is the root of everything. By truly understanding an individual it is crucial to understand the way they think.”

What is psychology

Psychology, like I stated before, is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions. There are seventeen major fields of psychology, however there are only a handful that I am considering while I move forward from my freshman year: abnormal psychology; dealing with psychopathology and abnormal behavior, psychology; analyzing how neurotransmitters influence our behaviors, clinical psychology; concerned with assessment and treatment of mental illness, cognitive psychology; studying mental processes including thinking, perception, memorizing and learning, comparative psychology; the study of animal behavior, counseling psychology; therapeutic treatments to clients experiencing a wide variety of symptoms, and developmental psychology; looks at the lifespan, from childhood to adulthood. Mrs. Bigart found an interest in, “child psychology because it is interesting to see how there is such a rapid cognitive

change in such a short amount of time.” I also found an interest in developmental psychology because I’m a nurturist. To explain further one of the greatest psychological debates is nature vs. nurture. That a human is born with social characteristics already encoded within DNA provided from their parents; nature, or your traits are developed through experiences that impress upon your psyche; nurture (Parke, Guavain 2009). It is within the developmental stages and the viewpoint of a nurturist structures my interest in serial killers and behavioral psychology. Because I find that the makings of a serial killer are within the subconscious scars of childhood experiences.

Credentials of achievement in psychology

There are multiple degrees or credentials that a psychology rout can allow. The first is an associate’s degree taking only two years and allowing professions in counseling psychology or possibly clinical psychology. A bachelor degree requires four years at the college level needing clinical coursework in social work, counseling, psychotherapy, social work, human services and internships experience with counseling or therapy are apart of the curriculum (EFPA 2014). To continue with earning your masters degree along with a bachelors degree you need four years of study to enter graduate programs that are for major concentration into the exact field of psychology you are planning to attend (EFPA 2014). Your master’s degree requires all previous academic achievements listed inclusive of six years extensive practicum and experience in counseling/therapy, psychotherapy, and human services requiring assessment, diagnosis and treatment experience as well within specific fields of psychology (EFPA 2014). Then becomes your doctoral degrees, licentiate you into psychology(EFPA 2014). Mrs. Bigart warns however that, “Psychology is a difficult field to be successful in because when helping patients its not a black and white situation, it’s a grey area in a spectrum. Now a days to be a very successful psychologist you need to gain a PHD, and commit to research which is a difficult and challenging task.”

Michigan State University's psychology program

There are a variety of psychological inventories at Michigan State such as research opportunities to construct and to be a part of research conducted by students, professors, interns etc. Also provided are undergraduate and graduate programs, a facility and clinic (MSU department 2014). There are over fifty faculties and six major sub-disciplines of psychology offered at Michigan State including: behavioral neuroscience, clinical, cognition and cognitive neuroscience, ecological-community, organization, and social/ personality (MSU department 2014). Because this field is so broad Michigan State provides multiple forms of academic support to help you specify and clarify issues with joining such a broad field such as career and placement services and additional resources. Graduate programs are inclusive to teaching assistantships/ research assistantships, also Michigan State has been awarded more university-level fellowships than any other university department over the past decade (MSU department 2014). Graduates are engaged in publishing results of research and peer-reviewed journals having the ability to present at scientific conferences (MSU department 2014).

Future prospects of psychology

There will always be a need for psychologist. People who have an understanding of the basic mind. Psychological disorders are viable issues that can affect anyone and in a solid portion of the population, people have succumbed to psychological issues, small and passing at a moment in time or effective throughout life. With growing development in psychology the field is expanding in other occupational fields such as educationalist, business managers and engineers (Seel 2000). Its highly unlikely for psychological skills to become obsolete even though technology has the ability to track and reveal patterns in the brain indicating activity, disorders are forever changing and will always need a human decryption for forefront knowledge of the psyche. Below, figure 1, is one of the reasons that psychology will always be expanding. This book is the all important and ever changing, Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual of Mental Disorders. Every published disorder is in this what you could call dictionary, but, DSM is published multiple times when new discoveries in mental disorders become prevalent, also when discoveries on already established disorders shift or are proven otherwise. Just like science nothing is ever concretely proven, just prevalent as the best understanding until proven otherwise.

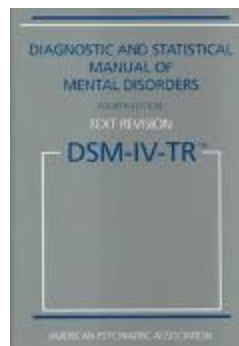


Figure 1

How writing is prevalent in the field of psychology

The DSM manual is a prime example of the importance of writing. This book is one of the key utensils in all sectors of psychology, without the understanding of publishing and editing to maintain the correct and most accurate account of each specific disorder, interpreting and justifying a psychologist's analytics would be unorganized and discomfoting to patients. Writing is also an important factor for publishing portions of observations, this can be essential in finding connections and conclusions when a psychologists goes back to reread. Psychology can include dialogue being recorded, so, to have the ability to write descriptions of your professional opinion on the body language and the dialogue of your patient at that specific time, is crucial for later study and analytics. Again publishing in general. Psychological books for students in the field are crucial, example, I have not had a psychology class that didn't include a book pertaining to that specific section.

Conclusion

The understanding of human interaction will always be needed which is why psychology is a top two most popular major students involve themselves with. Its appeal with a fascinating possibility to truly understand the behavior of a person is what has drawn myself and others to choose psychology as a major at Michigan State University.

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